

# Defending the Nation's Heritage

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**T**he Department of Defense (DoD), as the manager of over 25 million acres, is a major player in National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance actions. Lands controlled by DoD contain myriad historic properties, including those which bear witness to the country's earliest Native American inhabitants, the subsequent periods of exploration and colonialism, manifest destiny, plantation economies, internal strife, and more recent events which reflect alternating periods of global aggression and goodwill. DoD's preservation efforts provide a connection to the significant events of the nation's past through material cultural remains as well as sites and structures. These historic properties offer insight into events that shaped the prehistoric landscape, molded European presence on these lands, and forged a new nation following the declaration of war on the English throne by the firebrands of the American Revolution.

DoD's activities in defense research, technology, and flight have, in themselves, left behind historic properties of national significance. The stewardship of these resources serves as a lasting reminder of the importance of military actions in world events and as a legacy of military achievement.

DoD's obligation to protect the nation's heritage has its own historical roots. In 1872 Congress delegated the responsibility of protecting the first national park to the War Department. In the late-19th century, as Civil War battlefields came under federal protection as memorials to persons and ideals, their management was assigned to the Secretary of War.

Today, in response to legal requirements and increasing public concern for stewardship of cultural resources, DoD has become a leader in the development of formal compliance programs. These programs can be appreciated from two perspectives.

From a heritage perspective, the NHPA offers an unprecedented degree of protection to the nation's cultural resources; without that law much of our cultural heritage would have already been lost in the name of progress. From a military planner's perspective, compliance allows agencies to

conduct missions with the assurance that their actions will be unimpeded by the threat or reality of legal challenge. Thus, the cultural resources management program serves to increase mission flexibility.

DoD's cultural resources stewardship benefits the nation in a variety of ways including scientific and educational contributions, commemoration of historic milestones, and efficient use of tax dollars. An example of the economic benefits can be seen in adaptive re-use of historic structures. Preservation of historic buildings offers useable space financed by an earlier generation of taxpayers and often preserves design features not readily reproduced with modern techniques.

The material cultural remains preserved through DoD efforts offer an educational resource and a physical connection with the nation's past. Publications, presentations, and outreach programs offer an outlet for the dissemination of information on DoD's demanding management responsibilities, far-ranging cultural resources programs, and plans for future preservation efforts.

CRM is an example of one vehicle for sharing information with a larger audience. The compendium of articles comprising this issue of CRM addresses an array of topics covering examinations of land use and military mission, compliance with specific regulations, fresh approaches to management and protection of cultural resources, specific examples of the preservation process at work, and challenges facing historic preservation as we enter the 21st century. Through the circulation of information on cultural resources work, this issue of CRM heightens public consciousness and also conveys to cultural resources professionals the scope of DoD's contributions to preservation of our nation's heritage.

Twenty years ago few people involved in historic preservation understood the magnitude of the cultural record standing in threat of ruin or buried under the surface on DoD lands. Few people recognized the kind of effort required to properly manage these resources. Fewer still realized the rewards that would be reaped from DoD's expansive preservation efforts.

This issue of CRM demonstrates how far DoD efforts have come and how much they have accomplished. The job is not complete, however, and much remains to be done. Future issues of CRM will highlight the tasks that lie ahead and the steps to be taken to fulfill preservation goals as we move toward and into the next millennium.

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